

**SECTION 8.30 THE EVALUATION**  
**Last Update: 12/08**

**The Evaluation**

"If you have accomplished all that you have planned for yourself, you have not planned enough."  
- Edward Everett Hale

**The Performance Evaluation as a Component of the Overall  
Performance Evaluation Process**

All too often in the past, the performance evaluation has appeared for the employee's review out of nowhere. The supervisor has been informed by agency management or the personnel assistant that an evaluation has to be done for the employee, either to be able to give them a within grade pay increase or because the department wants a 100% completion rate, and so the supervisor quickly generates "something." If done in a vacuum without first developing a performance plan, discussing expectations with the employee, collecting meaningful performance data and providing informal feedback throughout the evaluation period, chances are, the evaluation will most likely not adequately address the employee's performance.

In order for the evaluation to better reflect the employee's performance, those affected by it – the supervisor, the employee, higher management – need to realize that the evaluation is the culmination of effectively following the performance evaluation process. At the very least, the process includes the Individual Performance Plan at the beginning of the evaluation period and monitoring of the employee's performance throughout the evaluation period against the performance plan.

This mini-manual begins with the assumption that the supervisor, the employee, and higher level management have engaged in that process.

**What Parts of the Individual Performance Plan and Evaluation  
Comprise the Evaluation?**

Part 2, Results and Rating and Part 3 make up the Evaluation section.

**Part 2 – Alignment with the Agency Performance Plan**

Some of Part 2 is developed at the start of the evaluation period as part of the Individual Performance Plan. This includes the individual performance strategy (goal), action steps, performance criteria, and timetable. The Evaluation segment of Part 2 includes Results and the Rating for each individual performance strategy (goal).

It is recommended that the Evaluation be started near the end of the evaluation period or after it has just ended to allow adequate time to gather background data and consider what you want to say. Ideally, the evaluation should be completed and shared with the employee within 30 days of the end of the evaluation period for timeliness as well as ensuring that the Individual Performance Plan for the next evaluation period is in place on a timely basis.

## Results

Since the State of Iowa performance evaluation system is results-oriented, this section is critical. A certain amount of reflection needs to go into it to ensure that the employee receives meaningful performance feedback. Since there are so many types of jobs in state government and so many types of employment situations, the section has been designed to provide maximum flexibility.

The main thing the supervisor needs to do is to determine if the strategy (goal) was accomplished and if so, how well. You can do that through documenting your responses to the following questions:

- Were the action steps completed?
- Were the action steps completed on a timely basis?
- How well were the action steps completed?
- Were the action steps completed as written or as anticipated?
- Were the performance criteria met?

Information cited in the Results section should not come as a surprise to the employee. In fact, you may want to ask the employee to provide you with this data prior to your beginning to write the evaluation. This helps assure that the employee had an opportunity to provide input. On the other hand, you will probably be monitoring and tracking completion of their action steps and their performance criteria and timetables yourself, so that by the time you begin to write the evaluation, you will be quite aware of how well the employee has done and will have dealt with poor performance or other performance-related issues as they arose during the evaluation period.

The main purpose of the Results section of the evaluation is to summarize and document performance and set the stage for planning for the next evaluation period. Comments do not need to be lengthy as long as they address the questions listed above in concrete, objective terms. However, this section is expandable to allow you whatever space you need to adequately describe the employee's performance.

## The Rating

After you have documented the results for the individual performance strategy (goal), you determine the rating for it. **This may seem obvious, but it bears repeating: the description of performance that you include in the Results section must correspond with the rating you give the strategy (goal).** Unless you have otherwise qualified the expectations in the Results section, saying that the employee did not complete the action steps, or didn't complete them on time, or didn't meet the performance criteria, and then giving the employee a rating of "Meets Expectations" or "Exceeds Expectations" is not appropriate. Conversely, providing nothing but glowing comments about the performance or not addressing any performance problems in the Results section and then giving a rating of "Does Not Meet Expectations" is also not appropriate.

Here are the definitions of the ratings:

**Meets Expectations** – Performance consistently fulfills the job requirements and expectations (strategies, action steps, performance criteria, and timetable). The employee is doing the job expected for employees in this classification.

**Exceeds Expectations** – The employee consistently performs well beyond expectations (strategies, action steps, performance criteria, and timetable) and does outstanding work.

**Does Not Meet Expectations** – Performance does not consistently meet expectations (strategies, action steps, performance criteria and timetable).

With the focus on results in the performance evaluation system through concrete action steps, performance criteria and timetables, determining whether the employee met, exceeded, or did not meet expectations should be a fairly easy, objective decision to make. The one area that may tend to be somewhat subjective is if the action steps, performance criteria or timetables were modified at some point during the evaluation period.

For instance, if the individual performance strategy (goal) or action was to write Chapters 1-10 of a work manual and in actuality the employee only completed Chapters 1-9, you need to consider the following factors:

- **Was the strategy (goal)/action step too ambitious and unrealistic?** If this was the case, did you and the employee discuss this at some point prior to the end of the evaluation period, and if so, did you support that conclusion? If you respond “yes” to both questions, you should have documented this discussion so you could refer to it in the Results section, and the fact that Chapter 10 was not completed should not be considered in the rating.
- **Did the employee encounter problems beyond his or her control** in attempting to complete Chapter 10? For instance, did the employee’s work rely on input or support from others who did not meet their deadlines? Did decisions made by others put the content of Chapter 10 on hold? In cases like these, the employee could not have reasonably met the expectation, so the fact that Chapter 10 was not completed should not be considered in the rating. Again, though, at some point prior to the end of the evaluation period, you and the employee should have discussed this situation and determined how to deal with it, and these decisions should be documented in the Results section.
- Was Chapter 10 not completed **for reasons directly attributable to the employee?** In other words, for reasons related to performance? If this is the case, the fact that it was not completed should be considered in the rating. And in the Results section, you should discuss the reasons why it wasn’t completed to establish a link to the Individual Development Plan for the next evaluation period as well as a possible link to the next Individual Performance Plan. (If a similar individual performance strategy (goal) or action step is to be undertaken, based on what was learned this time, what steps will the employee take/what support will the Department provide to assure completion the next time?)

## **Part 3 – Achievements, Strengths and Overall Rating**

### **Achievements and Strengths**

Most of what you need to know to complete this section is found in the Instructions for completing the form. However, the following considerations may also be helpful:

- Most of the employee's key achievements will probably have been covered already in Part 2 in the Results section of the individual performance strategies (goals). Although you may want to highlight one or two of those here as well, you may decide that this section in Part 3 is where you want to lift up achievements that were not related to the individual performance strategies (goals).

Keep in mind, though, that if the employee has performed poorly on the individual performance strategies (goals), under most circumstances, achievements cited here should not offset the overall rating.

- The ratings in Part 2 may all indicate the employee "Meets Expectations," but there may be other parts of the employee's overall performance that exceeded expectations that you want to document as well. This is the place to do that.
- When listing "strengths," you are actually listing competencies the employee has successfully demonstrated. In some cases, you may want to cite these strengths simply as a way of giving positive feedback or to acknowledge to the employee that you are aware of these positive aspects of her or his performance. At other times, you may be laying the foundation for either development or improvement plans. In the case of development plans, the strength may be something you want the employee to build upon or demonstrate more frequently in the future. You may also want to show how the strength can be employed to improve other areas of performance.
- Some employees have indicated that they received the most meaningful feedback from this section. Many go to this section first after they receive their evaluation, most likely because this section is briefer and perhaps more positive than the Results section. It is important to complete this section for the positive feedback it gives to the employee.

### **Additional Comments**

Traditionally, this section has been intended for comments that didn't seem to fit well anywhere else in the performance evaluation. Although that is still the purpose, supervisors are now cautioned not to focus the bulk of their comments about the employee's performance here but instead to do that in the Results section, where the real focus should lie.

And even though this section is sometimes referred to as the "catch-all," anything written here still needs to be as objective, factual and concrete as what is written elsewhere in the evaluation.

### **Development Plans**

**The "Development Plans" segment looks ahead to the next evaluation period**, although it is based on what has been said about the individual's performance in the evaluation period being rated. You have a couple options for how to complete this segment. Some positions and some circumstances may not require an in-depth plan, maybe just a few bullet statements to indicate what the employee needs to focus on in the future and for what purpose (performance improvement, enhancement of current skills, anticipation of new skills to be required in the future, self-enrichment, etc.). For these cases, this segment of Part 3 will probably suffice.

When the situation calls for a more detailed plan, you may want to provide the employee with an Individual Development Plan (IDP), which is a separate document. (See "The Individual Development Plan" model found elsewhere on this website) If you prepare the IDP at the same

time as the Evaluation, you may simply want to indicate in this box in Part 3 to “see Individual Development Plan.” If the IDP has not yet been completed, you may want to indicate here in Part 3 the key points it will include, so the employee has some idea what to expect.

## Overall Rating

The Overall Rating is not necessarily an average of the ratings for all individual performance strategies (goals). One or a combination of individual performance strategies (goals) may be more critical to the job than the others and therefore may assume a higher **weight** (importance) in the overall rating process. To determine if this is the case, ask the following questions:

- What would be the consequence if this individual performance strategy (goal) was not met or was not met correctly? If not met, what impact would this have on the employee’s work products, outcomes, and service delivery? What impact would it have on the unit? The agency? On citizens or other service delivery recipients? Would there be budgetary or financial repercussions? Would it affect the safety or well being of others?
- How critical is the individual performance strategy (goal) to meeting the agency’s mission or bringing it closer to its vision? If not met, would the agency’s ability to meet its mission suffer?
- Is there zero tolerance for not meeting the individual performance strategy (goal)? In other words, would not meeting the individual performance strategy (goal) be grounds for discipline or discharge?
- How much time is spent meeting the expectations in this individual performance strategy (goal)?

There may also be other factors that require a higher weighting of one or more of the individual performance strategies.

If you decide to weight one or more individual performance strategies (goals) higher than the others, these weightings should be shared with the employee at the beginning of the evaluation period when the performance plan is discussed. Ultimately, you, as the supervisor, must use your best judgment to determine the overall rating and be prepared to discuss this reasoning with the employee.

## Sign-offs

The employee is not required to sign the Evaluation, although the statement that accompanies the sign-off indicates the employee may not necessarily be in agreement with the contents of the Evaluation. If the employee refuses to sign, the supervisor needs to note this on the Evaluation.

The date you as the supervisor sign the Evaluation is also known as the *Evaluation Date*. This date is entered by your personnel assistant into HRIS along with the overall rating and evaluation period dates after the completed evaluation has been turned in for recordkeeping. The Evaluation Date is the date DAS uses to track completion of performance evaluations for all permanent full-time and part-time employees in the Executive Branch.

## Recommended Actions

This section is for the personnel assistant more than the employee receiving the evaluation. It links any follow-up personnel or pay actions supported by the evaluation to the appropriate personnel or payroll documents.

**Salary Increase** – This section is only for non-contract covered employees. If “Yes” is checked, it signals to the personnel assistant that there needs to be a corresponding payroll document. Although the percent or amount of pay increase will be on the payroll document, it can also be noted here under “Other.”

**Permanent Status** – This is intended for the evaluation done near the end of the probationary period to determine if an employee will attain permanent status. Check this box only if that situation applies.

**Other** – As mentioned above, the primary purpose for this section is to indicate the percent or amount of increase. However, other follow-up actions may apply. For instance, if a short-term improvement plan and/or “special evaluation” is to be done for the next three months could be indicated here.

## Next Steps

Next steps are discussed at the conclusion of the Individual Performance Plan and Evaluation Overview and Instructions.